

# Cultural Changes

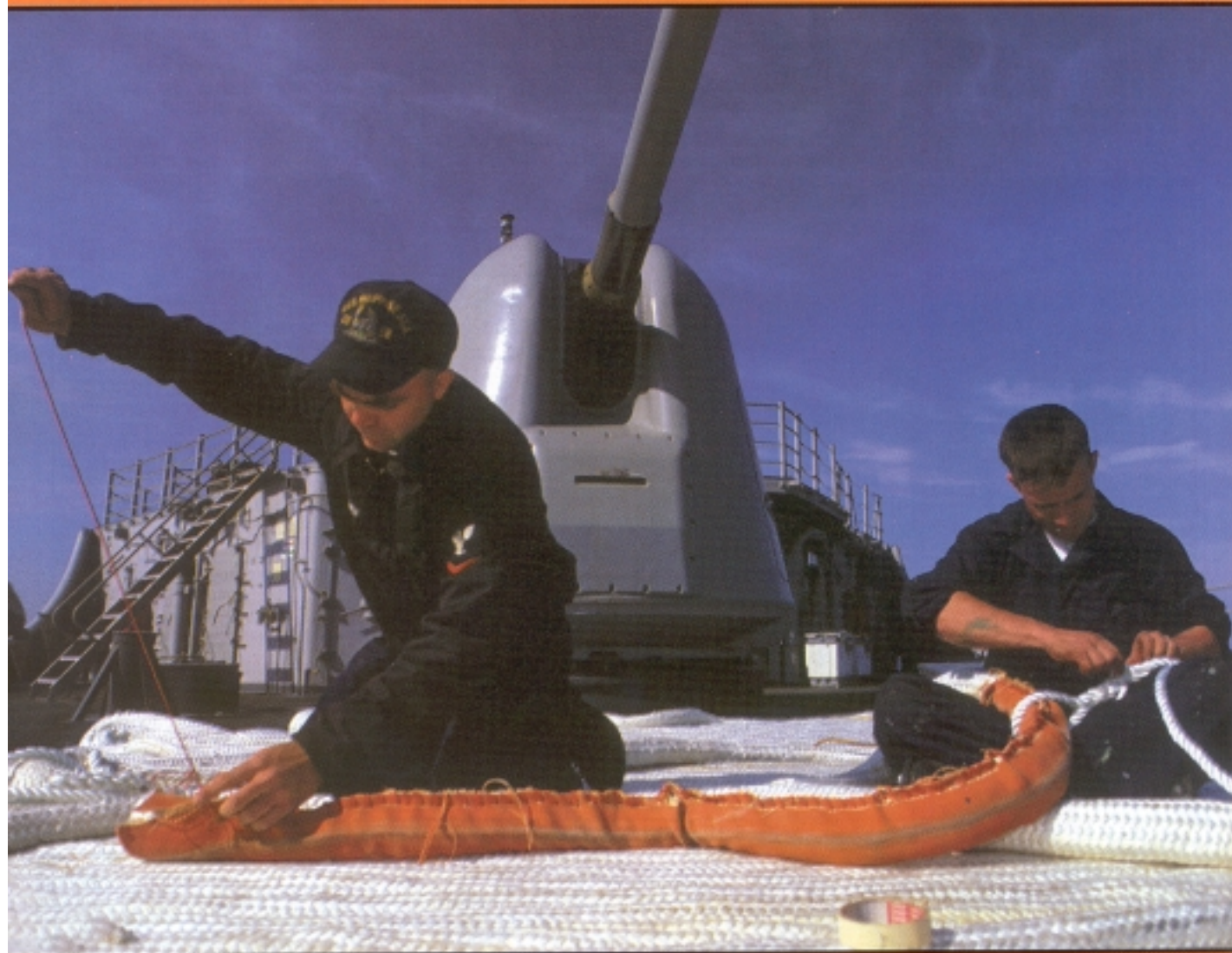
## What Stays & What Must Go

By Rear Admiral Michael G. Mullen, U.S. Navy

Eight new flag officers have laid out what they believe are the central issues for the surface Navy in the coming century—such as acknowledging that “free” labor really isn’t. Now it’s time for community input.

**A**s we sprint into 2000 and assess the future of naval and joint warfare, we are confronted by change. Revolutionary and evolutionary concepts such as network-centric warfare, distributed firepower, distance support, and optimal manning are shaping tomorrow’s battlefield, the ships and systems being designed to fight in that environment, and the expectations of the sailors who will operate those ships and systems. Information is available to everyone, seaman to admiral, at speeds and

BRANDT VOLKHOFF





in a volume unimaginable only a few years ago. Technology advances so quickly that a software update might be obsolete before it can be installed and tested.

People, too, have changed. Most of the youth of our nation view a career in the military through an entirely different filter from the military leaders of today. Preserving the peace while preparing for war remains our top priority, but quality of life for sailors and their families has become a dominant issue in the Navy and is at the core of our ability to provide well-trained and well-prepared sailors to fight and win in the future.

Tempering this swirl are cultural values and time-honored traditions founded on personal sacrifice, arduous duty, and extreme conditions at sea. We never want to turn our backs on this proud heritage, but we can anticipate and adapt. We can make the needed adjustments to our culture, traditions, and policies to keep us at the leading edge without discarding all that has been learned and valued by sailors for more than 225 years.

The surface warfare community needs a strategy, one that clearly identifies the cultural issues, then allows for discussion and debate with the leaders in the surface Navy to determine the path we will take. With these thoughts in mind, and to support the evolving "Surface Warfare Vision" and the acquisition and manning of the ships and systems that will execute it, I tasked eight of our most recently promoted surface warfare flag officers to meet, bound the issues, debate the facts, temper the emotion, and make recommendations on how to effect those cultural changes that will best support our long-term vision and goals. What follows is a summary of their labors.

The fundamental issue here is not whether we will effect cultural change, but how we will do it and to what extent. I have made a cultural issues white paper available to industry and forwarded it to many Navy commands and organizations for review. These initial recommendations are a start at breaking the mold, but in all likelihood they will not provide the complete answer to how we will train, operate, and conduct naval warfare in the 21st century. What we need now is additional and constructive community-wide feedback.

#### *Attitudes Toward People and Risk Management*

Going back to World War II, the attitude far too prevalent within the surface Navy has been that people are less costly than equipment. From system design through maturation, we routinely have added billets to mitigate risk, improve performance, and reduce variance. Little attention was paid to the cost of these additional crew members and great stock was placed in the ability of their numbers to ensure success. At sea, with each new tasking we simply directed more people to do more work.

With a seemingly limitless supply of "free" labor, we could ignore acquisition cost (recruiting) and return on investment (retention). Today, however, the cost of acquiring and retaining motivated and professionally competent sailors rivals that of new systems and equipment. In almost every case, people account for nearly 75% of the "real" cost of bringing forward and operating any new ship or system.

We no longer can use people to "fix" system and ship design problems—not only because it is the right thing to do, but also to control total ownership costs. The surface Navy must acknowledge that people are the most valuable and expensive aspect of any new process or system. They must be considered in the design process from day one. Acquisition and development must be integrated and interoperable, fully address human roles and requirements, and reduce workload allocation to the human.

More bodies is not the answer to risk either. Our operational risk management (ORM) system helps us identify real costs and benefits and recommends extra controls where hard data require them. Most often these are extra processes and technologies, not more people. A recent example is the initiative to reduce the impact of flight quarters on our surface ship crews. ORM provides us with an optimal assessment of risk in everything we do. We must believe in it and use it.

#### *The Ship and "Ownership"*

Ships are unique. In the minds of their crews, each one is a living entity, and crew members feel a strong loyalty to their ships that often extends down to individual watch stations or equipment. This unquantifiable but real force is a powerful unifying tool that can produce an extraordinary outpouring of effort by the crew in times of stress. We all have seen our crews perform amazing feats, but we must proceed here with caution. This force multiplier is vulnerable. Poorly designed crew manning and crew rotation schemes, for example, can check its development. In addition, if the "outpouring of effort" is called on too often for too little, the bond of loyalty can be strained beyond repair.

Manning innovations such as block manning, detachments, and, to a lesser degree, crew rotation offer cost reduction but are useful only to the extent that loyalty and ownership are preserved or improved. Policies that demand increased crew effort must be valid. The ongoing efforts of the Chief of Naval Operations and fleet and surface type commanders to reduce the most onerous of the interdeployment training cycle requirements and increase in-port duty sections are positive steps and must continue.

#### *Crew Organizational Principles*

Surface ships traditionally have been organized around a hierarchical rank structure. Officers are separate from enlisted and significant differentiation exists between senior and junior officers and between chief petty officers and other enlisted personnel. Within this military hierarchy there has been selected use of civilians to support specific afloat operations; however, watch standing on warships always has been reserved for uniformed military personnel.

There may be some benefit from minor adjustments to standard crew organizational principals, but our traditional officer and enlisted hierarchy has been validated by the test of time and should be retained for the foreseeable future. Civilian manning for surface combatants and expeditionary warfare ships is not contemplated. Initiatives to outsource various support tasks, including food



On an optimally manned ship, there will be few undertasked sailors available to take on damage control. Survivability will have to accrue from measures such as signature reduction and systems that can detect and then control fire, flooding, and other damage autonomously.

service, general cleaning, working parties, and facilities maintenance, particularly while ships are in port, should be pursued.

#### *Chain of Command, Accountability, and Responsibility*

Within our traditional crew hierarchy, the assignment of responsibility, span of control, and personal accountability must be reviewed in light of today's and tomorrow's information-management and decision-making systems. Battle groups generate millions of e-mails. Many affect operations and few can wait for "chops" from above. More than ever before the speed with which a decision is reached and implemented is a primary measure of effectiveness. To reduce these time lines, flatter, more decentralized systems and organizations are expected and envisioned for the future.

New command-and-control arrangements must be optimized to provide situational awareness, reduce time, tighten decision loops, and ensure agility in responding to changing circumstances. Acceptance of more risk and the rearrangement of accountability may be necessary to meet these new requirements. We must pursue now the operational, watchstanding, and administrative shipboard organizations that will allow us to outthink, outmaneuver and outfight a cunning adversary.

#### *Ship Design Practices*

In the past, messing and berthing space were allocated as perks of seniority and rank. Similarly, quality-of-life space and other nonoperational real estate (crew's lounges, exercise rooms, learning resource centers, etc.) received little design priority and usually were the first to feel budget-driven reductions. The people we need to recruit and retain today expect better living and working conditions at sea.

New ships and systems must be designed around the sailor. Crew spaces must provide quality of life equal to or exceeding commercial standards and state-of-the-art learning on demand. Nontraditional quality-of-life initiatives such as berthing crews ashore when the ship is in port also should be investigated. If well crafted, these changes can coexist with and support traditional "messes" that promote the social cohesiveness of the rank structure. In particular, the gap between quality-of-life standards for officers and those for enlisted men and women must be closed.

#### *Survivability*

Our past practices in this area relied heavily on personnel—large damage-control parties who by their very numbers were to buy us a degree of survivability. Optimal manning and such labor-intensive practices are fundamentally inconsistent. On an optimally manned ship,



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there will be few undertasked people available for collateral tasking should damage occur. In addition, recent history has demonstrated that responsiveness, organization, command and control, and training are far more important than numbers alone.

Survivability of future ships will accrue from the sequential contributions of signature reduction, reconfigurable systems, and improved damage-control processes and technology. Such a tiered system must be able first to avoid or minimize enemy attack, and then, if needed, to autonomously detect and control fire, flooding, and other damage. A significant investment may be required to ensure the effectiveness, reliability, and redundancy of these automated systems. The final product must provide a level of survivability markedly better than that available in today's fleet.

#### *Ship Operating Patterns*

Today, overall readiness varies in step with a ship's operating cycle. Readiness is highest during deployment and lowest at the beginning of the interdeployment training cycle. Scarce resources, independent personnel-rotation policies, and independent maintenance schedules exacerbate these swings. The net result is suboptimization of the surface fleet.

Surface readiness swings will never be completely flattened without substantial resources. The best avenue of attack may be to tailor and improve the supporting infra-

structure, particularly the personnel distribution system and our hierarchy of intermediate maintenance activities and depot maintenance. With the arrival of our new ship classes and as the "full service contractor" concept evolves, we should challenge industry and the shore infrastructure with flattening this curve.

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#### *Personnel Policy*

Most of our recruiting, training, assignment, and rotation plans are based on dated policies and practices. The Navy's ability to compete with industry for talented people is further constrained by legislative limitations on compensation and other quality-of-life issues. Accordingly, recruiting and retention suffer. Insufficient funding and staffing and overtasking of the distribution system result in gapped billets and underdeveloped careers.

The surface Navy strongly supports all initiatives that improve the overall manning and distribution system such that optimal manning can be achieved and maintained throughout a ship's operating cycle. This includes a rational approach to funding personnel accounts, including the individual's account. The distribution system must be streamlined for optimally manned legacy ships as well as for the ships of the future. Initiatives that reduce the number of rating groups and enlisted codes should be pursued. Billet-specific training task analyses should precede the establishment of new billets, new or consolidated ratings, and new enlisted codes. Personnel qualification standards, curricula, and training tracks must be aligned with these analyses. Initial training should be tailored, sufficient, and just in time. Skill and tactical reinforcement must be embedded in all new systems to support on-the-job and crew proficiency training. We are going to have to change our personnel distribution system dramatically.

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#### *New Construction Uniqueness*

As ship design becomes more focused, it is possible that the end products may be so unique that their crews (both officer and enlisted) also may have to be unique

within the surface community. As a result, a new and different career progression and training track (as part of a unique supporting infrastructure) and "closed-loop detailing" (to retain unique skills in-house) may be required. There are many issues—including costs associated with separate infrastructures and the impact of tailored career management on the community at large—that will have to be considered if this tack is taken.

Until short- and long-term costs and benefits can be thoroughly assessed, however, all new ships, their crews, and any unique infrastructure must be interoperable and compatible with and supportable by the legacy fleet. Future ships and systems may demand special skills, but a training regime should evolve that does not diminish interoperability. In addition, closed-loop detailing of some sort, which in all likelihood will be needed, should not be viewed as the final solution. The surface warfare community must retain professionalism and flexibility in its officer and enlisted personnel to sustain the future maritime-dominance, air-dominance, and land-attack-warfare oriented fleet.

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#### *It's Our Turn*

These are the difficult cultural and community issues we must confront. Some might view this as a cleared lane through a minefield with danger to either side. We might change too much or too little. We have to overcome inertia and generate momentum but not lose control. This is not a simple task.

The world 20 years from now will not look like the world today. We must be ready, and we have lots of exciting work in front of us. We must be prepared to go in harm's way; we must be prepared for and respond to the greatest of leadership challenges; and we must stay true to ourselves as accountable sailors whose responsibility is vast and whose rewards are always plentiful but oftentimes intangible. These are exciting times, and it is our turn! I solicit your thoughts.

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Admiral Mullen is Director, Surface Warfare Division.